

Japan Christian Activity News

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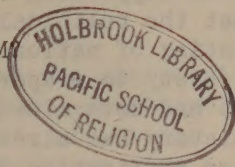
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Govt.-backed celebrations opposed ANTI-FOUNDATION DAY GROUPS GEAR UP

(Last Monday, Feb. 3, the NCC Yasukuni Committee joined with other Christian groups, religious, civic and academic bodies, and the Sohyo labor union in a rally at the Diet's Lower House office building, to urge the Japanese government to withdraw governmental support from a ceremony organized by Rightist groups celebrating Japan National Foundation Day on Feb. 11. After speeches by opposition political parties and discussion on the issue, the group drafted a protest statement and delivered it to the vice-director general of administrative affairs.

The following statement was written by SHOJI Tsutomu, NCC General Secretary designate, for use in an interview with a New Zealand radio network.)

There is no scientific or genuine historical basis for selecting Feb. 11 as the National Foundation Day of Japan. This particular date was chosen because of a prehistoric myth centering on Emperor Jimmu, who was at best a very militaristic folk hero. Certain reconstructions were made in this myth that were more political than historical to perpetuate continuous support for accession to the throne of a long line of emperors.

Through the study of human history we know that myths serve very dangerous ideologies especially when political leaders want to control the people of a country during periods of so-called national crisis.

National Foundation Day has very strong religious overtones connected with the Shinto religion, used to undergird the emperor system. It seems certain to me that the establishment of this day of deference to the Shinto religion is being used to support the emperor system. This is a clear and direct violation of the principle of "separation of religion and state" as provided for in our constitution. Shinto religious groups as well as the Seicho-no-ie offshoot religion are the most influential among ultra-rightist groups planning elaborate ceremonies and parades related to this day. We know that the government is acting in violation to the constitution if it is involved in such activities. It is then on these grounds that we vigorously oppose government involvement or sponsorship of such celebrations.

One of the most influential organizations that is pressuring the government to become involved in these activities is the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations. The present political leadership as undergirded by the Federation of Economic Organizations is oriented toward the building of a framework of unity in the Japanese people and nation under the figurehead of the emperor so that there may be preparations laid for the meeting of national crises.

MORE

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The present political leadership is interpreting the present economic situation as a national crisis. It is inevitable that both on the domestic front as well as on the international front there should be friction and conflict over economic competition.

It is therefore necessary for us to fully understand the social and economic milieu that is the backdrop for these special National Foundation Day ceremonies that the government is supporting and in which the government is to be involved. I do not believe that the political leadership should turn in this direction in hopes that the fomenting of national fervor will cause the present problems and contradictions in society to evaporate. On the contrary, the only salvation for Japan is a conscious and determined turning away from the militaristic nationalism of the past which history has already judged to be a hollow sham, toward determined affirmation and realization of democracy as characterized by domestic and international social and economic justice, predicated upon diplomacy and international cooperation.

As a Christian I am obliged to cooperate with any and all groups which support and are determined to strengthen the present constitutional democracy.

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Update Taiwan

SUPPORT ORGANIZED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Last Sept. 30, JCAN (#524) reported an action of the NCCJ Central Committee supporting the "Declaration on Human Rights" issued Aug. 16 by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Japan's historical relationships with Korea and Taiwan are such that Japanese Christians feel a special responsibility toward fellow Christians in both countries. In this connection the NCCJ has tried to serve as an ecumenical channel for concrete expressions of concern for human rights in Korea and Taiwan. General Secretary John NAKAJIMA, in a private capacity, is one of the Christian members of a voluntary organization called the Taiwan Political Prisoner Rescue Association, for which NCCJ Central Committee member, OSHIMA Koichi is the spokesperson.

On Jan. 12 the *Washington Post* published an "Appeal From Concerned Japanese" signed by 27 Japanese, including Nakajima, Oshima, prominent Christian lawyers NAKADAIRA Kenkichi and ONO Masao and Amnesty International's Japan Section Chairperson NISHIMURA Kanichi. This appeal, released to the press on Dec. 24 by the Taiwan Political Prisoner Rescue Association, protests inhuman torturing of political prisoner YANG Chin-hai, who was charged with "sedition" and given a life sentence in a secret trial after serving as campaign manager for opposition candidate YEN Ming-sheng in the 1975 Taiwan elections, and says of the treatment of Yang and Yen:

They are now being held at Green Island, whose facilities and box-like cells are said to rival the infamous Tiger Cages of Vietnam. Their imprisonment and prolonged brutal treatment is clearly a violation of the Universal Declaration

.... /more

For Jim TREECE, its *Itterasshai* (go and come back) cause it can't be *Sayonara* (good-bye for good). Jim has been working with us as part of JCAN editorial staff for more than a year now. He leaves 21st February for the U.S.A. but says he may come back to Japan.

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Of Human Rights. We demand that the KMT (Kuomintang) authorities end all torture, and restore full health to Yang Chin-hai and others like him, including all those who have been locked up under such conditions for over quarter of a century.

The appeal is also on behalf of several young people, arrested for election activities, of whom it says,

These young people were all concerned about the misbehavior of Japanese companies and tourists in Taiwan. As Japanese we must reflect deeply about their concerns, and at the same time we must insist that the KMT authorities give them proper treatment and open and fair trials.

When asked how this voluntary group got started, spokesperson Oshima explained that the Japan section of Amnesty International had been unable to reach a consensus concerning the future of Taiwan and Mainland China. Some wanted to advocate a future return to Peking; others wanted to support Taiwanese independence. It was decided to form a separate grouping of those taking a neutral stance toward Taiwan's political future, but doing all in their power to support the human rights of individual Taiwanese. Oshima was asked to chair the Tokyo section; KAWAKUBO Kimio, the Osaka section. The voluntary group of individual members has been doing what it can to arouse public opinion on behalf of human rights and to help political prisoners to receive fair trials, with adequate legal counsel.

Newspaper publicity is regarded by Oshima's group as highly effective. The Japanese press has given very little space but stories in U.S. and Hong Kong papers have had positive results, Oshima believes.

Another kind of approach was made in early November when group representatives called on the *Asia To Kankei Kyokai*,* to appeal for fairness in the November elections and appeal for fair election procedures and the democratic rights of candidates and voters. The official who met with them asked why they did not voice similar protests to the Mainland government; but Oshima's group believes that this intervention may have made some difference in the November elections in Taiwan. At least irregularities were less flagrant than in 1975.

The Aug. 16 Declaration on Human Rights, Oshima explains, was related to U.S. President Carter's sending Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Peking. Concerned that this could lead to closer Peking-Washington relations, the Taiwan government asked private organizations, including the Presbyterian church, to communicate directly with President Carter. The resulting Declaration was not exactly the kind of communication the government had in mind and there has been subsequent government investigation of the statement and its distribution in the official church newspaper. Church leaders have been called in for questioning, but so far no punitive action has been taken against them.

(Alden MATTHEWS)

*(the informal channel for business and political relations between Japan and Taiwan)

"Mission and Ministry in Asia" is the theme of a three week study seminar for Japanese seminary students at St. Andrews Seminary in the Philippines. Sponsored by the Japan Anglican Seminary of Tokyo, the program got under way as two professors and six students left for Manila on Feb. 4. They will study the Christian church in the Philippines and the role of the Japanese church in Asia, with an emphasis on actual experience.

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What attitudes brought death?
IN MEMORIAM: MIKAWA YOSHIMI

(The first hearing of the MIKAWA Yoshimi murder case involving a U.S. serviceman in Iwakuni, was held in January 1978 at Yamaguchi Prefectural court. Another hearing is scheduled for next week. A memorial service for the murdered woman was attended by about 30 people of the community around "Serendipity," an NCC sponsored servicemen's center in Iwakuni. The following article was written for JCAN by Robin MC ARTHUR, co-director of the center.)

MIKAWA Yoshimi was murdered and sexually mutilated here in Kawashimo. Her murder was just one more pronouncement of the sexist/racist attitude here.

The anger I feel because of her death is directed towards the military, the system and myself. She called for help, "*Tasukete, Tasukete.*" She voiced her need in death, and it was not listened to, as in life. Mikawa is the eighth woman to be murdered here in nineteen years; for a community as small as that around the base, and considering how rare crime of this type is in Japan, we know that there are distinct social forces at work.

"When in Australia you will treat the women as you would American women..." This is how the "Kangaroo orders" read to marines being sent to Australia. This infers that it is O.K. to use, abuse and maybe even kill Asian women. Does this mean that the military in whatever country, will classify women as human or not by their physical (caucasian) features. It's more than time now, to examine the military mentality and to demand changes.

The bar district around the base is set up to keep the marines in a given area thus protecting the good women from the men. The women here face double, triple discrimination. Even though they are serving society, they are still ostracized, by Japanese and Americans. However, we should not look down upon these women but maybe even applaud them. Talking recently to a man who has been here on and off for sixteen years, he told me there were many women like Mikawa, "And it's a good thing there was, because if there weren't, women would not have been able to walk on the streets at all." Society is wrong looking at women as sex objects. It's most wrong of all teaching these values to our children!

Mikawa used to sleep at our house sometimes. Small things used to bother me-- she wouldn't sleep on a sheet or wash her feet. She always insisted on paying us for staying at the house. If she had some sweets she would take a few and give the bag to Damon (our son). I also remember one morning when we didn't have any money and we were out of milk, she gave us some money and wouldn't take the change because she thought we were really broke. I also remember that she bought clothes and then would throw them away. I felt it was really important for her to get an apartment and even found two she could afford. Angry when she wouldn't do as I wanted, I felt that if I told her she couldn't stay with us any longer she would get her own apartment. Well she didn't get her own apartment...

Sad as it is, it took her death to make me realize I have no right to push my values on other people, and most strongly that I am not the one to judge. I mostly wish that I could have celebrated her in life as I do now in death. My hope in writing this article is to share my thought that her life had more value than her death, and so we will not ignore this, but try to learn.

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If Christian Education is the option....
WHAT'S THE SECULAR EDUCATION NORM?

("The distinctiveness and mission of Christian higher education is an important issue that is receiving inadequate formal attention." This statement, taken from "Education in Japan--A Two-Pronged System" (JCAN #529, Dec. 9, 1977), hints at the potential--whether realized or not--of Christian education to demonstrate in the classroom the same concern and respect for individuals that Christ affirmed on the cross. The divergence between this kind of education and that of secular schools in a secular society, can only be understood if both forms of education are studied. To this end, JCAN offers the following interview with MAKIEDA Motofumi, chairperson of the Japan Teachers' Union, translated from the Feb. 6 1978 issue of the Asahi Shimbun newspaper. --eds.)

Why was there so much discussion of student drop-outs at the recent teachers' union conference that took place in Okinawa?

"This is an indication of the difficulties teachers are facing in the present educational system which is extremely distorted and dehumanizing. Teachers do not know what to do in this situation."

There was a report that over 70 per cent of students of a high school in Hokkaido smoke. You talked about the drop-outs; yet the union's emphasis is on compulsory high school education. Isn't this a contradiction?

"This is a way of opening the question of the rationality of today's high school education. Over 90 per cent of junior high school students want to go to high schools. Yet only 24 per cent of the present students can keep up with the present math classes. The content of education is aimed at the elite as in pre-war education, and a large percentage of today's students find it inadequate for their needs.

Why are so many students not keeping up?

"The content of education is extremely advanced, and is not organized for mass education. (The second year middle school math in the British education system is taught as 5th grade math material in Japan.) The time allotment for teaching is also very short. Each subject has to be taught at the speed of a bullet train. This is automatically creating drop-outs."

There are voices asking to organize classes according to the students' ability...

I do not believe in such classification. It may be good for only cramming information, but it obviously produces minus factors in students' growth toward personhood."

The teachers union objects to offering supplemental classes, so that the parents send children to private "juku" classes. This helps to create parents' distrust for teachers.

"We object to supplemental classes for college entrance exams, but as teachers' responsibility we try to do our best for the drop-outs."

Some children say that they like "juku" better than school.

"The present public schools are difficult, and not interesting because of their formality and uniformity, while 'juku' classes do not have any restrictions; teachers can create teaching materials according to the students' ability."

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Movie Bulletin

"BOKYAKO NO KAIKYO" (The Straits of Oblivion)

Thousands of Koreans taken by the Japanese government to the northern island of Sakhalin (now a part of Russia) to work during the war have still not been able to return to their families. The tragic story of the more-than-30-year wait is told by family members in the documentary movie, "*Bokyako no Kaikyo*", produced by Chu-Nichi Eigasha and now being shown in special showings in various parts of Japan. (It is in Japanese and Korean--with Japanese subtitles.) The movie is well worth seeing and gives important background for understanding the significance of the suit now in the courts on behalf of these "forgotten people." Below are the remaining engagements on schedule:

Tokyo	Feb. 12	Sun.	14:00	Arakawa Kuminkaikan Hall	(806-6531)
	Feb. 18	Sat.	14:00, 18:30	Yotsuya Kokaido	(341-2991)
	Feb. 25	Sat.	14:00	Shinagawa Kokaido	(474-1261)
Koganei	Feb. 19	Sun.	14:00	Koganei Kokaido	(83-1134)
Nagoya	Feb. 18	Sat.	14:00	Tobetsuin Seishonen Kaikan	(331-9576)
	Feb. 19	Sun.	11:00, 14:00	"	
Kyoto	Feb. 25	Sat.	14:00, 18:30	Kyoto Kyoiku Bunka Center Hall	(771-4221)
Shizuoka	Mar. 3	Sat.	16:30	Kenminkaikan Hall	(44-2942)
Miura	Mar. 4	Sun.	18:30	Saitama Kaikan	(29-2471)

(Helen POST)

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Blind Ski Trip

BUILDING NEW COMMUNITIES

by UTSUMI Seiji

Ski trips with the blind have been an annual project of the Ueda Shinzancho Church (Kyodan) of Ueda city, Nagano prefecture. This past Feb. 5-7, about 20 blind or partially blind and 30 volunteers--some from as far as Kyushu--joined the trip. The beginning skiers learn to walk on skis and soon tackle the slopes, with the blind beginners distinguished only by the instructor's shout of "Fall down!" when necessary. More advanced blind skiers used the ski-lifts for longer slopes.

"The occasion is good for those blind people who normally would lack opportunities to do physical exercise. After skiing for an hour, most of them look exhausted, but their faces tell us that they are truly enjoying the workout," a participant reported. "Mastering skiing is not the aim of this trip. Rather, it is to share life together with those who are not blind, with those who do and do not have handicaps. Non-blind volunteers joined the camp not merely to 'help' the blind, but to seek a new community for all."

* * *

We have received 10 JCAN Valentine Gift Subscriptions so far and more are coming. Keep them pouring in!

To our warm-hearted readers, Thank You Very Much!

Happy JCAN Valentine!

I would like to send a Valentine Gift Subscription to someone in Asia. I enclose:

_____ \$12.00 for Airmail (¥3,000) _____ \$10.00 for Seamail (¥2,700)

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